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Office of
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# Major News Releases and Speeches

## March 4 - March 11, 1983



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# Remarks

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

**Remarks prepared for delivery by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block before the Production Credit Association's National Meeting, Kansas City, Mo., Mar. 11.**

It's good to be with you, and thank you for inviting me to help commemorate your 50th anniversary. You have taken great strides during these 50 years. You have built a reputation that any business would be proud to stand behind. And most importantly, you have proven that you can be there when agriculture needs you.

I'm not saying this because I happen to be standing at your podium. I've worked closely with the Farm Credit System during the current slump in our economy. I've seen your concern for farmers first hand. Your dedication to American agriculture has always come first. I have expressed these thoughts to many audiences during the past months.

We have worked together effectively, and we have every right to be proud of our success. We still have a ways to go, but I believe the roughest period is now over.

Unfortunately, we have had to overcome more than just the adverse effects of a slumping economy. That was tough enough. But we also found ourselves in a position of having to defend ourselves against the negative perception given to us by a number of distorted news reports on farm foreclosures.

I watched these news reports on national television with mixed feelings—and none of the feelings were good.

As a farmer, I was embarrassed by the disruptive way in which a small number of farmers behaved. And as secretary of agriculture, I was outraged by lack of objectivity in which these isolated farm sales were presented to the American people.

Keep in mind, this was not the farm press. I've worked well with our nation's agricultural reporters, and they know better. They're aware of the problem.

Instead, these farm auctions were covered by hit-and-run journalists that didn't bother taking time to get their facts straight. They left the opinion that these foreclosures were widespread. They implied we were

driving farmers out of business, that we were running families off the land and destroying the family farm.

This kind of sensationalism has attempted to cast us—you and I—as the villains. It shouldn't be that way. And it's time the public heard more of the truth.

We should all realize the consequences of a poorly informed public. Already, within the past year and a half, we have seen at least four attempts by Congress to pass some form of loan deferral legislation.

They all have one common thread. They would allow, at the farmer's request, a moratorium on loan repayments to FmHA. I'm certain you are aware of what this would mean to the entire lending industry. That's why it's important to present the true picture.

Actually, we are all victims of what took place in agriculture during the 1970s. It's not easy to forget. It was a period in which the world demanded all we could produce. Our farmers expanded and invested heavily to meet the demand.

The lending community was right there beside them, sometimes urging them on. Credit was readily available. The farm debt shot up from $54.5 billion in 1970 to an estimated $215 billion in 1983.

Percentage wise, the dollar volume of Farmers Home loans rose even more dramatically. It rose eightfold during the '70s—from $1.6 billion to nearly $14 billion. Yet there was no appreciable increase in personnel to service this increase.

In fact, it all happened so rapidly that many private agricultural lenders were also unable to adequately supervise their loans. Much of the lending was blindly attached to the rapidly inflating values of real estate.

Finally, the expansion bubble of the 1970s popped. Interest rates started escalating. Inflation took a nasty grip on our lives. The world went into recession. You know the rest. A drop in markets.

Large surpluses. Depressed prices. Net farm income fell off the edge, and we found ourselves facing some needed adjustments. The situation affected every farmer. But considering the economic turmoil we faced, a relatively small number found themselves under major economic stress.

For the record, let's use some figures to put things into perspective. We'll find that the situation isn't as widespread as the public has been led to believe.

It would be significant to point out right away that half of the farmers in our country don't even carry a long-term debt. The other half, those with a long-term debt have relied mostly on the Farm Credit System and Farmers Home.

Of all agricultural loans outstanding, PCA has about 16 percent. The Land Banks carry 27 percent and Farmers Home, 12 percent. The rest are with commerical banks, insurance companies or private individuals.

About 2.7 percent of PCA loans are in arrears. Land Banks list 2.5 percent and commercial banks have 3.9 percent. Then we go to Farmers Home and see 24 percent behind in payments. This would be an eye catcher if we didn't tell the rest of the story. Let's look at actual foreclosures.

During 1982, completed foreclosures for the Farm Credit System totaled about 1,200. Not much compared to the more than a million of loans you are carrying.

But even more surprising, considering its 24 percent delinquency, is that only 844 foreclosures were carried out by Farmers Home. That's about thirty-one hundredths of one percent—less than a half percent of all loans we carry. It's certainly not the widespread government takeover that some would have the public believe.

Don't think I'm taking these figures lightly. While they are not alarming, neither are they irrelevant. I'm always concerned about trends, and these figures show what could happen if net farm income fails to improve. They have given us a warning signal, and we all share a responsibility in responding to that signal.

The Farm Credit System has already shown its willingness to assume its share of the responsibility. Your supervisory agency, the Farm Credit Administration, last year initiated a nationwide credit monitoring program. It is designed to identify developing trends, and to quarterly check the pulse of agriculture's financial life.

The system has also worked with methods to help borrowers who experience repayment problems. I know this has been difficult. Yet,

you have gone the extra mile. It may not be reported on the evening news, but be assured that your good work is appreciated.

Looking to the future, I believe we will not quickly forget the lesson learned during the '70s. New lending will have to focus less on collateral and more on repayment capacity. This means you will have to develop an even keener sense in determining lending levels which are within the farmers' ability to repay.

You will also have to face the fact that government lending will not be able to continue as it has in recent years. Farmers Home and other federal lending agencies operate in a larger arena of national policy. Farmers Home has a role ctually, it's an obligation to assist in the success of those overall national policies. These include the reduction of inflation and less governmental competition in national money markets.

Perhaps we have created the wrong perception by labeling Farmers Home as the lending agency of last resort. This definition might lead some to believe we provide loans for only those farmers who are on the last step before collapse.

Actually, I view Farmers Home as one of the first steps. We want to put deserving farmers on their feet, and eventually graduate them to the doors of other private lenders. This is our goal. Your responsibility will be to prepare the way for these graduates.

Farmers also have a responsibility. These past two years have made it clear that management ability means more than production proficiency. The success of today's farmers will depend on their ability to be business people. That means keeping good records, controlling costs, and making sound cash flow projections. They must know how to manage their production, and they must know how and when to market their product.

More than ever before, today's farmers must structure their financial future so they are better able to handle the growing complexity of operating a farm in the 1980s.

Now let's look at how we have handled the responsibilities that rest with the federal government.

As you know, Farmers Home revised its guidelines at the beginning of 1982. This was done specifically to provide more help to producers who were under heavy financial stress. These guidelines are far from being unreasonable.

They require only that a producer:

— Adequately protect the collateral of his or her loan.

— Use sound agricultural management practices.

— Be willing to accept financial guidance and supervision from the agency.

— And have a reasonable chance of recovering from present financial problems.

With these guidelines, we helped 42,000 borrowers meet their credit needs in 1982. The same guidelines are being used to consider 1983 loans on a case-by-case basis.

We will also continue meeting with agricultural lenders and farm commodity organization leaders on a regular basis. This will help us monitor financial conditions and the severity of credit problems.

Let me also point out that our payment-in-kind program will reduce some of the financial lending stress which producers are experiencing.

During 1983 the PIK program will reduce total demand for short-term credit by anywhere from $1.3 to $2.2 billion. The growth in farm debt will be $5 to $6 billion less than otherwise expected. Debt with CCC will be impacted most, followed by the Farm Credit System and agricultural commercial banks.

PIK, of course, will also have longer-term effects. By reducing stocks, it will help build a foundation under any future upswings in prices at the market. This will put many producers into a much better financial position to repay outstanding debts.

Another way government can help is with the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation. We face many obstacles in agriculture, including high production costs, poor markets and commodity oversupplies. But weather has to be one of the most major obstacles.

Federal Crop is working hard to help farmers avoid the risk of weather, and they've come up with some very innovative programs. Right now it insures 28 crops in nearly all of the 3,000 agricultural counties across the nation. Also, the FCIC Board has approved 823 additional county programs for 1983 crops.

Let's not forget—this insurance is simply a tool for farmers to work with. It's a good tool, and a farmer would be wise in using it. But like many other tools being offered by the government—such as PIK—they give farmers the opportunity to make their own decisions. Nothing is

being forced on farmers. They are free to chart their own destiny. Our job in government is to help clear some of the obstacles. I've given you some examples of how we in government are trying to do our part. We've also talked about what you and the Farm Credit System have been doing. Now, let me make one more observation.

None of us like to see anyone fail. We don't like foreclosures. They can be a very traumatic, heart-breaking experience for a family. Yet, in good times or bad, it is going to happen. And it would be financial suicide, for both parties, if we keep lending to borrowers who have no reasonable chance for recovery.

Such a practice would weaken lending institutions and jeopardize future service to many deserving farmers. By removing the risk of failure, we would also be removing the freedom for others to venture and succeed. It could break the back of agriculture.

Well, we aren't going to let that happen. We have hung on so far. We're going to hang on a little longer. As I said earlier, the indicators clearly say we are on the threshold of recovery. Look at some of them:

— The latest index of leading economic indicators showed an increase of 3.6 percent, the strongest since 1950. It was also the ninth rise in the last 10 months.

— January construction spending increased 8.9 percent, the largest increase since 1946.

— First quarter GNP growth is running at about 4 percent, a rate higher than even the administration economists had forecast.

— Automakers increased February production 52 percent over February last year.

— The Commerce Department reported late last month that new orders for durable goods were up a solid 4.5 percent in January, the third consecutive monthly increase.

— Inflation also continues to be good news. It was only 3.5 percent for the 12 months since January of 1982. For the last six months it was only 1.4 percent.

— And interest rates are still heading in the right direction. Prime is down to 10-1/2 percent, and many economists see another couple points downward by summer.

Put all of these indicators together, and they spell recovery. It's an exciting time. Agriculture is going to be part of it. You are going to be part of it.

We will all have the satisfaction of knowing that we stayed the course without going to our knees. That, alone, will make the future even more rewarding.

Again, thank you for inviting me. You're a great group of people. I'm proud that you are associated with agriculture.

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# News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

## USDA INVESTIGATING ALLEGATION OF FRAUD IN CCC NONFAT DRY MILK STOCKS

WASHINGTON, March 8—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's inspector general is investigating allegations that whey protein was fraudulently added to limited amounts of nonfat dry milk purchased by the Commodity Credit Corporation in early 1981.

John V. Graziano, USDA's inspector general, said public health is not endangered by the nonfat dry milk in question. He said so far the alleged impropriety has involved only nonfat dry milk purchased from one midwestern source.

USDA dairy scientists and the inspector general's office are investigating to determine if the alleged fraudulent addition is limited to the single source.

Grazino said the alleged fraud was discovered when another firm repurchased the nonfat dry milk from CCC stocks for processing into consumer-sized packages of instant nonfat dry milk for donation to charities. Tests showed that the nonfat dry milk did not meet flavor and other test requirements, none of which affect human health.

The CCC buys nonfat dry milk for about 94 cents per pound. Whey protein, which is a by-product of cheese-making, sells on the open market for about 50 cents per pound. It is improper to add any amount of whey protein to nonfat dry milk.

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## COMPUTERS TO KEEP TRACK OF NATION'S PLANT RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, March 8—A computer network now being developed will do for plant scientists worldwide what seed catalogs do for gardeners—help them find the plants they are looking for.

What sets the U.S. Department of Agriculture's future electronic catalog apart from the gardener's is its size.

More than 600,000 different plants form all corners of the world will be catalogued in the computer-assisted GRIN, short for Germplasm Resources Information Network.

As fast as computers can punch out the words, scientists will be able to find among thousands of plants the specific ones needed for research or for breeding programs to cope with agricultural problems like droughts, blights or other emergencies.

Terry B. Kinney, Jr., administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, which will operate the network, said it will mean that scientists can sort out and identify plants faster than ever before.

"One of the payoffs will be that scientists can search through plant species for specific beneficial traits," Kinney said, "and then go to work to put into farmers' hands plants that resist disease and other dangers."

Kinney said the computer network is being completed by the Laboratory for Information Science in Agriculture, Fort Collins, Colo., to service the National Plant Germplasm System.

Within that system is the nation's storehouse of plant germplasm— the genetic raw material scientists need to develop new and better crop varieties that ensure a stable and plentiful supply of food and fiber.

USDA's Agricultural Research Service coordinates the system of federal, state and private organizations that cooperate in collecting, storing and preserving plant germplasm so it is available to plant scientists.

"Many of the plant materials stored in permanent or working collections are wild or semiwild ancestors of today's crop plants and other unimproved germplasm that will be extremely valuable to breeders in the future," Kinney said.

Computers are the "only realistic way to manage the huge variety of genetic materials maintained in the system," said Charles L. Gerhardt, computer specialist at the Beltsville, Md., Agricultural Research Center. He heads a team that will operate and update the system after it becomes operational in July.

Gerhardt said the network will provide data on yields, winter hardiness, days to maturity, resistance to diseases and other characteristics that plant breeders need. Also the network will make it easier to locate seeds and cuttings stored in the system's repositories located across the country and speed shipment to plant specialists.

According to Kinney, the germplasm system's value will increase in the future as genetic engineering techniques are refined and superior plant varieties are designed for disease resistance and high yields.

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## USDA STUDY RECOMMENDS EXPANDING INSPECTION EXEMPTION PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, March 4—A study released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicates some of the exemptions in federal meat and poultry inspection laws could be modified to eliminate unnecessary regulatory burdens without reducing consumer protection.

"In line with the study's recommendations, we will begin drafting regulations to expand exemptions for retail stores," said Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

"In addition, the agency is pursuing legislation permitting a discretionary inspection system for processed products that addresses the study's recommendations for changes in exemptions for those products.

"We are reviewing existing regulations in accordance with Executive Order 12291, the Regulatory Flexibility Act and the Paperwork Reduction Plan Act of 1980," Houston said.

"We conducted this study to determine if changes could be made to alleviate regulatory burdens on industry and minimize the economic burden on taxpayers, while still ensuring that consumers receive wholesome, unadulterated and properly labeled meat and poultry products."

Federal involvement in meat inspection began with the Meat Inspection Act of 1890. A series of legislative acts over the next 75 years culminated in what are now the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act. These two acts form the basis for USDA's meat and poultry inspection program.

The federal inspection laws generally require mandatory inspection in plants producing products for interstate and foreign commerce. Congress, however, provided certain exemptions, generally in smaller

operations, where there was little public health risk, or consumer fraud or deception.

The study identified eight categories of exemptions in the two acts, but concluded that only three—product exemptions, retail stores and central kitchens/caterers—should be expanded.

"The study found that inspection of many processed items involves the reinspection of previously inspected products," Houston said. "In many instances, the study concluded, the plant is simply handling and repackaging products such as pizza, canned soup and refined fats and oils.

Many of these products and processing techniques are similar to those regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. Passage of legislation introduced in the 97th Congress and soon to be reintroduced in the 98th session, which would give the secretary of agriculture authority to determine the degree of inspection to be conducted in meat and poultry plants and would enable the secretary to carry out the recommendations of the study," Houston said.

"The study further determined that the present retail exemption, which sets a total dollar restriction—of $28,800 or 25 percent of total annual sales—on annual sales to food preparation institutions other than households—unnecessarily limits competitive markets for retailers. According to the study, the dollar restrictions should be removed, and the sale of prepackaged inspected products to non-householders should not be included in figuring the 25 percent limitation," Houston said.

The study found that the present exemption policy for central kitchens, kitchens which prepare food in one centralized location for transport to satellite restaurants, creates marketplace barriers by unnecessarily limiting the number of outlets they can supply without USDA inspection. "Expansion of the exemption," Houston said, "would provide consistent inspection policies for central kitchens and caterers.

"In addition, the study recommended against an exemption for small red meat slaughterers similar to that provided to small poultry slaughterers," Houston said. The study found that available health data are insufficient to adequately predict the probable incidence of diseases that might be transmitted to consumers.

"In view of this conclusion, the limited expenditure of $200,000 of inspection for small plant red meat slaughter out of the $70.7 million

spent annually for red meat slaughter inspection is justified," said Houston.

The study recommended no changes in four other exemption provisions: slaughter of one's own livestock, religious and dietary slaughter operations—i.e., Jewish and Buddist methods of slaughter to conform to religious doctrine—custom slaughter operations and ritual slaughter—i.e., religious ritual which does not allow the animal to be stunned before slaughter.

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## USDA PROPOSES TO UPDATE RULES FOR PROCESSING PORK

WASHINGTON, March 9—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to update its processing requirements that assure destruction of trichinae organisms in ready-to-eat pork products.

"The proposed adjustments in freezing and salt-curing treatments have been proven effective in killing the organisms in studies conducted by USDA, the academic community and the industry," said Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

"Despite the extremely low incidence of trichinosis in swine, USDA requires federally inspected plants to use certain treatments that destroy any possible live trichinae in products such as hams, pork shoulder picnics and luncheon meats which are not customarily well-cooked by consumers," Houston said. These treatments include specific methods of heating, freezing and curing.

"After thoroughly reviewing present requirements and research on destruction of trichinae, USDA has concluded that alternative methods of freezing and curing also make pork safe," Houston said. "Therefore, USDA is proposing alternative combinations of time, temperature and salt content for treating pork used in 'ready-to-eat' products.

"For example, USDA studies show that dry sausages, like pepperoni and hard salami, can be safely made with less salt than is currently required. Therefore, the proposal wouid allow processors to decrease

the amount of salt from 3.3 percent to as little as 2.0 percent, but only if drying time is increased," Houston said.

"The existence of modern equipment in meat processing plants also allows greater flexibility, because plants can freeze product quickly and closely control the temperature. The proposal adjusts required freezing times accordingly," he said.

Trichinae—Trichinella spiralis—are microscopic parasites that live in the muscles of swine. Humans contract trichinosis—an infection that can be serious and, rarely, fatal—when pork or pork products from infected animals are eaten raw, or are undercooked or improperly processed. According to Houston, the parasite is not common in pork in the United States today -approximately .125 percent—slightly more than one-tenth of one percent—of slaughtered hogs are infected.

Written comments should be sent by May 9 to the Regulations Office, Attn. Annie Johnson, FSIS Hearing Clerk, Rm. 4637-South, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Additional information on the proposal, which is scheduled to be published in the March 10 Federal Register, is available from Bill F. Dennis, Director, Processed Products Inspection Division, Technical Services, FSIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: (202) 447-3840.

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## BLOCK APPOINTS MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES TO AMERICAN EGG BOARD

WASHINGTON, March 9—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block today named nine members and eight alternates to the American Egg Board.

The 18-member board administers the producer-sponsored national research and promotion program, designed to strengthen the egg industry's position in the marketplace. The program is funded entirely by a 5-cent per 30-dozen case assessment charged against eggs marketed by all nonexempt commercial egg producers.

The research and promotion program is authorized by the Egg Research and Consumer Information Act, enacted in 1974. The U.S.

Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service reviews the program's budget, plans and projects to assure that it is operated according to law and in the public interest.

The new appointees will serve two-year terms ending Dec. 31, 1984. Members, followed by their alternates, are:

North Atlantic states: Maitland E. Richardson, Skowhegan, Maine, and Emanuel Hirth, Manchester, Conn.; David W. Baker, Middletown, Del., and Norman J. Hecht, Walden, N.Y.

South Atlantic states: John Hamby, Jr., Durham, N.C., and Ronald Scott Braswell, Nashville, N.C.; Jack Linville, Zephyrhills, Fla., and James R. Biggers, Winter Haven, Fla.

East north central states: Harry W. Herbruck, Jr., Saranac, Mich., and John D. Weaver, Versailles, Ohio.

West north central states: Sheldon A. Vermes, Gaylord, Minn., and Dale E. Booth, Sioux Falls, S.D.

South central states: Hillman S. Koen, Jr., Hope, Ark., and Franklin E. Black, Cecilia, Ky.; Delvin R. Barrett, Bryan, Texas. Barrett's alternate will be named later.

Western states: Gerald C. Bookey, Seattle, Wash., and Antonio Cobarrubia, Turlock, Calif.

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## BLENDED CREDITS APPROVED FOR IRAQ

WASHINGTON, March 9—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block today approved a blended credit export package for Iraq of $230 million for the sale of grains, eggs, seeds and oilseed products.

Blended credits were provided for purchases of $80 million in wheat, $80 million in rice, $15 million in corn/barley, $30 million in eggs, $5 million in seed corn, $10 million in soybean meal, and $10 million in protein concentrates for animal feed.

"The use of this credit will substantially increase our export sales to Iraq this year," Block said, "providing further indication of the success

of the program as part of our intensified efforts to expand overseas sales of U.S. farm products."

Under the Commodity Credit Corporation blended credit program, interest-free direct credits under the export credit sales program, GSM-5, are blended with government-guaranteed bank credits under the export credit guarantee program, GSM-102.

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## MEAT AND POULTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO MEET IN WASHINGTON APRIL 13 AND 14

WASHINGTON, March 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Advisory Committee will meet April 13 and 14 in the Departmental Auditorium, Conference Room "B," 12th and Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.

The meeting, which is open to the public on a space available basis, will begin at 10 a.m. on April 13, and 9 a.m. on April 14.

According to Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, agenda topics include:

— Legislation to provide discretionary inspection authority in meat and poultry processing plants;

— Proposed regulatory changes for cured pork products\(emprotein fat free;

— Residue control program;

— Poultry post-mortem inspection;

— Proposal to require removal of kidneys from mature poultry;

— Ground pork standard;

— Fish protein use;

— Exemption study; and

— 1984 budget.

The committee advises USDA on issues pertaining to the meat and poultry inspection program.

Requests for transcripts or comments on topics listed should be sent to Linda Wood, director, executive secretariat, FSIS, Room 335-E Administration Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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## EXHIBIT TO SHOW WILDFLOWERS GATHERED IN COLONIAL TIMES

BELTSVILLE, Md., March 10—An exhibit called "Wildflowers Gathered in Colonial Maryland in the 1690's" will be on display March 14 through April 1 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library.

Featured in the exhibit are 45 individually mounted specimens from the DuBois Herbarium at the University of Oxford—dried flowering plants, ferns and conifers gathered in colonial Maryland by European naturalists in the 1690's.

On display along with the plants will be rare books written by late 17th and early 18th century English naturalists and others as well as original paintings and drawings of flowers grown in some of the royal gardens and estates of Europe from seeds gathered in colonial Maryland.

"Historically, this special documentation of the native vegetation of colonial Maryland collected almost 300 years ago is a unique addition to today's knowledge of the early contributions of American plants to European flora," said Alan Fusonie, historian with the library.

This exhibition is being presented by the University of Maryland, the National Agricultural Library, the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Christ Church Parish of the Episcopal Church, Port Republic, Calvert County, Md., and the Botanical Society of Washington.

The National Agricultural Library is located off the Washington Capital Beltway (Exit 25-A North) and U.S. Route 1 in Beltsville, Md., and is open to the public from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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## ABANDONED COAL-MINED LAND RECLAIMED IN 20 STATES

WASHINGTON, March 10—Nearly 3,000 acres of abandoned coal-mined land in 20 states have been reclaimed since 1977 for various uses under the rural abandoned mine program, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

Peter G. Myers, chief of the USDA's Soil Conservation Service, said the reclamation work has eliminated more than 500 health and safety hazards and prevented 95,000 tons of soil from leaving the sites and entering waterways. Water quality has been improved on 42,231 surface acres of lakes and 133 miles of streams.

Myers said the majority of the reclaimed land is being converted to grass and trees.

The program, established by the secretary of agriculture under authority of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, provides individual owners with cost sharing and technical assistance to reclaim abandoned coal-mined land.

Funds for the program come from fees collected from active coal mining companies. To date, funds have been obligated for 322 contracts covering 6,146 acres of land. Seventy-four of the contracts were signed in September utilizing a $14 million supplemental appropriation.

The federal government's share of the reclamation ranges from 25 to 100 percent, depending on such factors as the acreage to be reclaimed, the proposed use and whether the resulting benefits are mostly private or public.

Each landowner may receive funds for reclaiming up to 320 acres. The contracts run from 5 to 10 years.

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## NONFEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS INCREASE FOR SAVING SOIL AND WATER

WASHINGTON, March 10—Despite lean budgets, state, county and city governments have appropriated a record $185.6 million for

saving soil and water in fiscal 1983, an increase of nearly $16 million over fiscal 1982.

"Many state and local governments, while feeling their own budget pinches, still have appropriated 10 percent more this year for soil and water conservation," Peter C. Myers, chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's soil Conservation Service, said today.

"They agree that soil erosion is one of America's most serious resource threats, and that a strong agriculture is important to their economy."

State appropriations for soil conservation totaled $96 million, up from $14 million ten years ago. Local appropriations totaled $89.6 million.

Myers said the funds are used to accelerate conservation work—to speed completion of soil surveys, share the costs of farmer-installed conservation practices, and help pay for state and local shares of conservation and flood prevention projects.

One-third of the appropriated funds will be spent for conservation district operations, he said.

Thirty-six states increased funding from fiscal year 1982 to fiscal 1983.

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## USDA PROPOSES TO AMEND CITRUS CANKER RULE

WASHINGTON, March 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to make several minor adjustments in the citrus canker regulations concerning the import of citrus from Mexico.

USDA has scheduled a public hearing on the subject for March 24 at 10 a.m. at the Hilton Inn, Crockett Room, 2721 S. Tenth St., McAllen, Texas.

According to Harvey Ford, deputy administrator for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA is proposing to change the interim rule announced Jan. 5, to allow citrus products to be shipped to northern areas of Texas including Dallas, Ft. Worth, Abilene and El Paso and Louisiana including Sheveport and Monroe. The

proposed areas have no commercial or noncommercial citrus production.

Also, USDA is proposing to allow repacking and culling of Mexican citrus within the current restricted areas under strict rules and procedures. It appears that the changes would aid shippers affected by the interim rule but would continue to protect citrus-producing areas from citrus canker, Ford said.

Under the current regulation Mexican citrus is allowed to be shipped only to noncitrus producing states to protect the United States from the spread of citrus canker. Persian limes, lemons, grapefruit, oranges and tangerines may be shipped to all states except Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, Texas and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Written comments on the amended rule will be accepted until March 30 by the Regulatory Coordination Staff, Rm. 728, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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